



California Legislative Black Caucus

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MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS STEPS DOWN AS BLACK CAUCUS CHAIRMAN AND VACATES SENATE SEAT TO SERVE ON THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Sacramento, CA – Senator Mark Ridley-Thomas (D-26), leaves a legacy of effective leadership and a prolific body of legislation when he resigns from the California State Senate and steps down as Chairman of the Legislative Black Caucus to take a seat on the powerful Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors next week. Assemblyman Sandre Swanson (D-Oakland) and Assemblyman Curren D. Price (D-Inglewood) will now lead the Caucus as Chair and Vice Chair, respectively.

As chairman of the Legislative Black Caucus during the past year, Ridley-Thomas's tenure was characterized by collaboration and accountability. He set out with specific goals and objectives for the eight member body of African American legislators from both the Senate and the Assembly.

Ridley-Thomas' first official act was to host a weekend planning retreat that brought all members together at the Sheraton Grand Hotel in Sacramento, California.

The purpose of the retreat was to review, revise and recommit to the purpose, vision and mission of the LBC, while establishing a specific, measurable and realistic 2007-08 legislative agenda.

"My objective was to position the Black Caucus as skilled policy makers and committed public servants in California," Ridley-Thomas says. "I believe we have made important strides."

Among the objectives discussed at the retreat were the identification of legislative and non legislative priorities and initiatives for Caucus support. Ridley-Thomas and Caucus members called a press conference at the Capitol announcing those priorities.

With the health care crisis a priority issue, Ridley-Thomas enlisted the Latino and Asian Pacific-Islander Caucuses to co-sponsor a hearing on Health Disparities in minority communities. Attendees filled the Capitol hearing room to listen to health care experts from across the country.

Another key objective of Ridley-Thomas' chairmanship was to celebrate and commemorate the Centennial of Allensworth, commission a traveling exhibit on Allensworth, and seize the Centennial celebration as an opportunity to educate the public about the role of African Americans in the development of early California.

Ridley-Thomas secured the sponsorship for the traveling exhibit: "Allensworth: 100 Years of the California Dream," that was housed in the State Capitol, the San Bernardino County Government Center, the California African American Museum and finally the Col. Allensworth State Historic Park. Utilizing his Caucus perch, Ridley-Thomas, along with other LBC members, collaborated with State Parks to produce a very successful Allensworth Centennial Celebration at the Col. Allensworth State Historic Park which drew some 4,000 attendees.

"My resignation from the California State Senate concludes, for now, the chapter of my tenure as a legislative leader in our State Capitol and it turns the page to a somewhat familiar chapter in my life of public service in local government," says Ridley-Thomas. "I look back fondly on my time in the state Assembly and Senate. I am proud of what we have accomplished together. I remain committed to working on behalf of many of the same constituents and look forward to serving many new constituents. For me public service is a way of life."